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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/23/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: CTWG: S/CT LETTER AND DRAFT REPORT TO PRESIDENTS
DELIVERED, BUT NO FORMAL REPLY RECEIVED

REF: STATE 75454

Classified By: Political Minister/Counselor Alice G. Wells. Reasons 1.
4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. On July 18, we delivered reftel letter from Ambassador Dailey to Ambassador Safonov, as well as a draft Report to the Presidents on the U.S.-Russia Counterterrorism Working Group (CTWG). Vladimir Prokhorov, Senior Counselor in the MFA's Office of New Threats and Challenges, confirmed that Safonov had received the letter from the Russian Embassy in Washington two days prior. Although he did not have any insight into Safonov's reaction to the letter or the draft report, Prokhorov expressed his own skepticism about several items listed in the draft report and in the Work Plan of the CTWG WMD Terrorism (WMD-T) Subgroup. MFA North America Department told us they hope to have comments on the draft report by the end of this week, but did not yet know whether Safonov would accept Ambassador Dailey's proposed meeting in the U.S. September 29 or 30. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Prokhorov told us that GOR agencies are still reviewing some items in the WMD-T Work Plan, in particular the development of a joint framework for nuclear forensics. He said GOR agencies might be hesitant to pursue other areas of cooperation in the Work Plan due to an unwillingness to divulge sensitive information. For example, Prokhorov mentioned that the concerned agencies would be reluctant to share its first response and crisis mobilization capacities with the U.S; this would effectively put the breaks on the U.S. proposed seminar on foreign consequence management and collaborative responses to a WMD crisis. When we reminded him that the U.S. would be sharing sensitive information with Russia and that our joint capabilities could be highly effective in responding to a WMD disaster, Prokhorov demurred, claiming Russia wanted to focus on non-proliferation rather than post-WMD crisis response.

¶3. (C) Prokhorov said our attention would be better focused on strengthening regulation and oversight over companies manufacturing and researching biological, chemical, and nuclear material. He added that stricter regulations on these companies could reduce the amount of dangerous substances susceptible to theft and proliferation, and decrease the terrorist threats to specific manufacturing and research sites. We told Prokhorov that such oversight decisions were made on a national level, and asked him to reconsider the benefits of joint projects like the consequence management seminar, given the likeliness of a WMD attack.

¶4. (C) Although Prokhorov agreed that terrorist groups might seek to use WMD for an attack, he reiterated the well-known Russian argument that bioterrorism, in particular, was hardly an imminent threat. He claimed the threat of a bioterrorist attack was minimal at best, because terrorist networks do not

have the highly trained personnel necessary to use biological weapons. He could not offer any insight into the exchange of bioterrorism threat assessment methodologies, proposed in the Work Plan. Instead, he emphasized his point about the "virtual" bioterrorist threat by referencing the U.S.' failure to apprehend suspects in the 2001 anthrax mail attacks, and questioning whether the casualties were actually caused by anthrax at all. Prokhorov tangentially alleged that the U.S. promised to provide the FSB information on the anthrax cases, but never did.

15. (C) Prokhorov indicated interest in potential multilateral initiatives on counterterrorism and strengthening existing areas of international collaboration. For example, he recommended that the G-8 examine counterterrorism best practices on de-radicalization, and that we work to increase the budget and expand the responsibilities of the U.N. Counterterrorism Committee Executive Directorate.

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